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*United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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THE NEED FOR AND BENEFITS OF THE CREATION OF THE  
LIGHT ARMORED RECONNAISSANCE REGIMENT

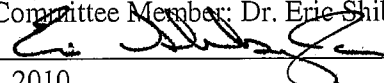
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Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Paul Gelpi \_\_\_\_\_  
Approved:  \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: April 14, 2010 \_\_\_\_\_

Oral Defense Committee Member: Dr. Eric Shibuya \_\_\_\_\_  
Approved:  \_\_\_\_\_  
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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The Need for and Benefits of the Creation of the Light Armored Reconnaissance Regiment.

**Author:** Major Michael R. Nakonieczny, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** The Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) community, as currently operating, lacks the clear and unified voice required to maximize the capabilities of its four battalions and to champion initiatives required to make the community relevant in the future. The creation of the LAR Regiment will provide the leadership required to alleviate this problem and will free the battalion commanders to focus on training their battalions and deploying them in support of combat operations.

**Background:** Recent changes in the utilization of the LAR Battalions as battle-space owners serve as a shift from the doctrinal mission of the battalions. As a result of this change, a lack of LAR Regimental leadership has resulted in deficiencies in LAR doctrine, organization, materiel procurement, training,

**Recommendation:** Using the creation of the Marine Special Operations Regiment as a model, the Marine Corps establishes the LAR Regiment. The creation of the LAR Regiment will significantly increase the already formidable capabilities provided by the four independent LAR Battalions.

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## Preface

I chose this research topic as a result of my experiences as the Commanding Officer of Light Armored Vehicle Training Company (LAVTC) from June 2007 to June 2009. As the Commanding Officer of LAVTC, I served as a voting member on multiple Light Armored Reconnaissance Operational Advisory Groups (LOAG) and Light Armored Reconnaissance Conferences. The LOAG consists of all LAR Battalion Commanders; the Inspector-Instructor for the Reserve LAR Battalion; the LAVTC Commanding Officer, and the Deputy Commandant, Plans Policy and Operations (DC PP&O) LAR Occupational Field Sponsor. Tasked with meeting semi-annually in order to provide the MAGTF commander with the most effective LAR capability in the near and long term, it was my honor to sit on these boards and to help shape the future of the LAR community.

Although the work done by the members of the LOAGs I attended was commendable and undoubtedly of the best intentions, it lacked continuity and a unifying vision from conference to conference. This lack of unity was a direct result of the constant deployment of battalion commanders in support of Operation IRAI FREEDOM, which ensured the same voting members were rarely at consecutive conferences. This lack of continuity and lack of a defined conference leader resulted in the continuous shifting of priorities and agendas. Individual personalities of the LAR commanders at times led to changes in doctrine, operations, assignment of manpower, and allocation of research and development funds that best served one battalion and not the entire community. Many senior enlisted and officers within the LAR community have spoke of a need to form a LAR Regiment in order to resolve the issues discussed in this paper. To the best of my knowledge, this paper is the first formal paper written to discuss the pros and cons of creating the LAR Regiment. I hope the paper serves a catalyst for further papers on the topic and for the refinement of my initial ideas. I am confident there are many within the LAR community who will comment that the LAR Regiment must be more robust than what I propose. I challenge these individuals to put their ideas to paper and work to propose a better solution. Regardless of how the LAR Regiment looks once established, I am confident it will provide the guidance and leadership required to truly maximize the contributions of the most versatile ground combat vehicle and Marines within the Marine Corps.

I would like to thank my wife and children for their patience during the execution of this project. I would also like to thank the many Marines and sailors I have had the pleasure to work beside throughout seven years of service within the LAR community. I am indebted to Dr. Paul Gelpi and Dr. Eric Shibuya for their patience, mentoring, and assistance in completing this project.

## **Introduction**

The United States Marine Corps should establish a Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) Regiment in order to maximize the capabilities of its unique LAR Battalions. Recent changes in the utilization of the LAR Battalions in Operation IRAQ FREEDOM as battle-space owners, which marked a significant change in the LAR Battalions' doctrinal mission, are the impetus for this change. As a result of this change, a lack of Regimental leadership has resulted in deficiencies in LAR doctrine, organization, materiel procurement, training, and assignment of personnel with LAR experience to key billets which would have better shaped the LAR community to meet the future requirements of the Marine Corps. The creation of the Marine Special Operations Regiment (MSOR) serves as a model for the creation of the LAR Regiment and highlights the significant gains that will result in a modest investment of an LAR administrative regimental headquarters. The LAR regiment will allow the subordinate battalions to focus on training for and fighting our nation's battles.

The creation of the LAR Regiment will significantly increase the already formidable capabilities provided by the four independent LAR Battalions. These LAR Battalions provide the United States Marine Corps and the U.S. Department of Defense an unparalleled capability for the execution of military operation across the Range of Military Operations. The LAR Battalions combine the mobility, protection, and firepower provided by the Light Armored Vehicle (LAV) with the lethal dismounted capabilities provided by Marine infantry to create formidable and flexible combined arms battalions capable of serving as independent maneuver battalions, force providers, and as recently proven in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, as battle-space owners. General David

H. Petraeus, Commander, United States Central Command recognized the tactical and operational advantage of the LAR Battalions. In a March 30, 2009 memo to the U.S. Secretary of Defense, General Petraeus stated, “Marine Corps LAR Battalions offer our commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan a flexible force with exceptional mobility, flexible C2 [Command and Control], precise and discriminating firepower, and adequate protection for employment in a wide range of mission profiles.”<sup>1</sup> Petraeus continues, “similarly capable units of this nature would be of value in Afghanistan, and potentially elsewhere in our AOR [Area of Operations], today and in the future.”<sup>2</sup> He concludes the memo requesting an increase in the total number of units that have the above-mentioned capabilities in the Marine Corps Force Structure.<sup>3</sup>

Simply adding more LAVs and capabilities that are more LAR-like will not achieve the full potential of the LAR community. The following paragraphs outlines the history of the Marine Corps LAV, how its role has changed since the LAV was first introduced, and how recent changes in the employment of LAR battalions make them unique amongst the Corps' other independent maneuver battalions. Using the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) process, the paper details the existing discrepancies in the LAR community and how the creation of the LAR Regiment will solve them. The paper concludes the LAR Regiment will provide ample benefits to the Marine Corps and United States Combatant Commanders for a modest increase in structure.

### **LAR: Their Changing Role**

The doctrinal manual for the employment of Marine Corps LAR Battalions is Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-14, *The Employment of the Light*



*Armored Reconnaissance Battalion.* MCWP 3-14 states the mission of the LAR Battalion is “to conduct reconnaissance, security and economy of force operations, and within its capabilities, limited offensive or defensive operations that exploit the unit’s mobility and firepower.”<sup>4</sup> MCWP 3-14 also states, “LAR battalion may function as an independent maneuver element or as an element of a larger unit such as a regimental combat team, or its subordinate companies may support other tactical units in the GCE [Ground Combat Element].”<sup>5</sup> Using the latter employment option, LAR Battalions have traditionally been task organized to support other infantry-based Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTF). This supporting role traditionally shaped the employment of the LAR Battalions over the course of their first twenty years of service. (See Appendix A).

The most significant change in the LAR Battalions occurred in 2003. After the successful invasion and occupation of Iraq, all three active duty LAR Battalions were re-deployed back to their respective home stations as the U.S. Army transitioned into stabilization and reconstruction operations. This transition did not go smoothly and the rise of a resistance movement in Iraq resulted in 25,000 Marines and sailors deploying back into Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II.

During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II, 1st LAR conducted security and stability operations in the Al Anbar province of Western Iraq as part of Regimental Combat Team Seven. In this capacity, 1st LAR performed a wide range of critical missions, including key roles in regimental size operations, in order to capture or kill terrorist and insurgent forces. Additionally, the battalion was vital in patrolling the western borders of Iraq in order to prevent the infiltration of arms and insurgents. Although only 1st LAR Battalion

deployed to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II, there was a plan to subsequently rotate the rest of the LAR battalions into Iraq as long as the war continued.<sup>6</sup>

While supporting Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II, 1st LAR Battalion was assigned an enormous tactical area of responsibility in comparison with other maneuver battalions. Major David Hudspeth, the operations officer for 1st LAR during the deployment witnessed first hand the significant battle space influenced by an LAR Battalion in contrast to a conventional infantry battalion.<sup>7</sup> He said,

we owned 22,000 square kilometers of battle-space: north of the Euphrates River at Al Qaim (60 kilometers north x 30 kilometers east) not inclusive of the river and inclusive of the Syrian border. We also owned south of Al Qaim including the Syrian, Jordanian, and Saudi borders, Points of Entry at Waleed and Trebil, and initially went all the way east to Ar Ar and Mudaysis.<sup>8</sup>

The commitment of 1st LAR to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II marked the first time an LAR Battalion served as a battlefield owner and signified a change in the utilization of LAR Battalions by the Marine Corps. In this new capacity, LAR Battalion's showcased the precise firepower, survivability, mobility, and robust C2 capabilities that enabled them to exceed the operational capabilities of other infantry units supporting the full spectrum of operations in Iraq. As a result, the rotation of LAR Battalions continued throughout the execution of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM until March 2009 when the focus of the LAR Battalions deployments shifted to Afghanistan. Since this shift, LAR battalions have assumed the same rotation schedule in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

### **A New Role Requires a New Regimental Command Structure**

The transition to using LAR Battalions as battle-space owners made it apparent that the LAR community needs a permanent command structure focused on its long-term

vision and standardization. The creation of a LAR Regimental Commander and staff will maximize the contribution of the LAR Battalions to the Marine Corps. The Joint Capabilities Integration Development System (JCIDS) Process defines a solution space that considers solutions involving any combination of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities as DOTMLPF.<sup>9</sup> Using the DOTMLPF model, the need for an LAR regiment becomes readily apparent. Leadership is the most important aspect gained through the creation of the LAR Regiment and will be addressed first.

### **Leadership**

The LAR community, as currently operating, lacks the clear and unified voice required to maximize the capabilities of its four battalions and to champion initiatives required to make the community relevant in the future. Before Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the four LAR Battalion Commanders were able to focus their time and resources on shaping the future of the LAR community to meet the requirements of the Marine Corps. The constant rotation of LAR Battalion Commanders in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM, deprives the community of such unity of effort and vision. The creation of the LAR Regiment will provide the leadership required to alleviate this problem and will free the battalion commanders to focus on training their battalions and deploying them in support of combat operations.

One way the establishment of the LAR Regiment will achieve this is by providing regimental command equity to the LAR community at the Ground Combat Element Operational Advisor Group (GCE OAG). Established in 1999, The GCE OAG serves as a forum to increase communications and representation of the operating forces'

requirements and interests with Headquarters Marine Corps and the Combat

Development System. As stated in the Charter for the Marine Corps Ground Board

Process:

The intent of the Ground Board process is to develop a thorough, consistent, and relevant message that articulates GCE priorities and issues. This will be accomplished through capabilities assessments of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF), from the perspective of the GCE that will identify capability gaps and vulnerabilities within the MAGTF, which require action by HQMC [Headquarters Marine Corps]. This process plays a vital role in determining the allocation of resources and the development of policy, in that it provides decision makers at HQMC with current operational input from the GCE Commander's perspective.<sup>10</sup>

At the conclusion of the OAG initial briefs on the first day, each Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) of the GCE separates to conduct separate functional OAGs. The functional OAGs serve as a forum for each community to identify and prioritize issues that directly influence the operational capabilities, manpower, equipping, training, readiness, and safety of their respective units. For instance, all of the artillery representatives gather in one area and all of the Ground Reconnaissance representatives meet in another. The LAV Operational Advisory Group (LOAG) consists of all LAR Battalion Commanders; the Inspector-Instructor for the Reserve LAR Battalion; the Commanding Officer, LAV Training Company (LAVTC), School of Infantry-West; and the Deputy Commandant, Plans Policy and Operations (DC PP&O) LAR Occupational Field Sponsor. The purpose of the LOAG is to meet semi-annually in order to provide the MAGTF commander with the most effective LAR capability in the near and long term.<sup>11</sup>

Although LAR is represented as a separate MOS in its breakout session, the LAR community is technically a part of the infantry community and decisions made by the

Infantry Operational Advisory Group (IOAG) have a direct impact on the LAR Battalions. The IOAG consists of all of the Infantry Regimental Commanders (Colonels); the Marine Corps Security Force Battalion Commander (Colonel); the Commanders of the Schools of Infantry (all Colonels); and the DC, PP&O Infantry Occupational Field Sponsor.<sup>12</sup>

Due to the lack of representation on the IOAG, the LAR community has encountered numerous pitfalls over the years as decision are made that affect the entire infantry community without adequate considerations of LAR's needs and requirements. One example of how the LAR community was adversely impacted by a lack of representation on the IOAG was the release of Marine Administrative Message (MARADMIN) 391/07. MARADMIN 391/07 granted Professional Military Education (PME) equivalency for the Sergeants Course to all infantry Marines who successfully completed a specific MOS course and their in-grade distance PME requirement.<sup>13</sup> MARADMIN 391/07 provided much needed operational tempo relief to the Infantry community, as a Marine Sergeant was able to attend just one school instead of two to be eligible for promotion to the next grade.

Before the release of this message, a Marine could spend fourteen weeks away from his unit attending mandatory Pre-deployment Training Program. With the passing of MARADMIN 391/07, the time away has been reduced to eight weeks. Unfortunately, there was no LAR representation at the IOAG to ensure the LAR Battalions were able to also reap the benefits entitled in MARADMIN 391/07. As a result, LAR Battalion Commanders must send their Sergeants to both the eight week Sergeant Course to achieve PME accreditation for promotion and a six-week Vehicle Commander course to

ensure tactical and technical proficiency.<sup>14</sup> Given only eleven months to conduct all required Pre-Deployment Training before the next Battalion deployment, the LAR Vehicle Commander spends fourteen weeks away from his unit and Marines. If a Colonel representing the LAR community were present during the IOAG discussion and subsequent vote on the topic, this oversight may not have occurred.

Another benefit of establishing a LAR Regiment would be the unity of effort provided by a Regimental Commander. As listed above, the LOAG meets twice a year in order to best determine the way ahead for the LAR community. Due to the continuous deployments of the LAR Battalion Commanders, the LOAG lacks the continuity needed to develop and execute a long-term campaign plan. The lack of unity of effort is exacerbated when the personalities of individual battalion commanders result in personality driven initiatives. Through the creation of the billet of LAR Regimental Commander, the LAR community would have a post-battalion Colonel in a position to steer the community and execute his campaign plan throughout his command tenure.

The subject matter expertise of a post LAR Battalion Command Colonel serving as the "voice of the community" would also be invaluable in his role as a mentor for all four LAR Battalion Commanders. This mentorship is especially critical when a command slating board selects an officer with no LAR experience to command a LAR Battalion. Of note, all three Lieutenant Colonels selected to command 1st, 2d, and 3d LAR Battalions on the 2009 command selection board have no previous LAR experience.<sup>15</sup> Colonel Masur, the Regimental Commander of the MSOR agrees that the creation of a regiment to serve as a link between independent battalions instead of the

battalions reporting straight to a commanding general provides significant advantages.

When asked about the benefits of the recent activation of his MSOR, he stated,

the [Marine Special Operations] Regimental Commander, as a colonel, is closer in his career path to the battalion commander than the commanding general. This allows lower level mentorship to the battalion commanders. It also enables the commanding general to engage his battalion commanders but not be over-burdened with lower level issues.<sup>16</sup>

The creation of the LAR Regiment will enable the mentorship required for LAR Battalion Commanders just as the creation of the MSOR did for the mentorship of the Marine Special Operations Battalion (MSOB) Commanders.

## **Doctrine**

There are two LAR specific publications currently available in the Marine Corps, MCWP 3-14 and MCWP 3-14.1 *LAV 25 Gunnery and Employment*. These documents are essential to the LAR Battalions as MCWP 3-14 serves as doctrinal guidance to MAGTF commanders during the employment of LAR forces and MCWP 3-14.1 ensures the standardization of LAR gunnery qualifications and training. Both of these documents need to be updated as required and must undergo a complete review every four years.<sup>17</sup> Despite this requirement and prior to 2009, the MCWPs had not been updated in more than thirteen years. The unacceptable duration of time between updating these documents serves as undeniable evidence that the process by which the LAR-specific doctrine is written and updated in the Marine Corps is ineffective. The process is ineffective due to the lack of supervision, manpower, and availability of subject matter experts. The LAR doctrine writing process would be significantly improved with the creation of an LAR Regiment, as the Regiment would provide a remedy to each problem identified.

In order to understand how the creation of the LAR Regiment would fix the LAR doctrine writing process, it is important to first understand how the current process works. To synchronize the various doctrines within the Marine Corps, the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration (DC CD&I) assigns responsibilities and identifies relationships among the various Marine Corps organizations involved in the doctrine development process. Marine Corps Order 5600.20P grants authority to DC CD&I to assign selected Marine Corps organizations as doctrine proponents. According to Marine Corps Bulletin 5600, "proponency entails the assignment of responsibility for the preparation, review, and periodic maintenance of a doctrinal publication by selected agencies from the Marine Corps supporting establishment."<sup>18</sup> Marine Corps Bulletin 5600 establishes Fires and Maneuver as the CDI custodian and LAVTC as the proponent for MCWPs 3-14 and 3-14.1. The fact the senior officer at LAVTC is a junior Major and the LAR experience of the CDI custodian varies depending on the individual means relevant doctrine requires input from subject matter experts within the LAR Battalions.<sup>19</sup>

In theory, the guidance and direction provided in Marine Corps Order 5600.20P should ensure the LAR related MCWPs receive regular updates. The reality is this process rarely works. Proof of this statement becomes evident by the fact that MCWP 3-14, although recently re-published on Sept 2009, was last updated on August 28, 1992.<sup>20</sup> The outdated MCWP 3-14 fails to update the doctrine validated from the initial invasion of Iraq and the subsequent lessons learned through the employment of LAR Battalions in the Counterinsurgency phases of the same war. Furthermore, the MCWP failed to make required changes in regards to the improved capabilities of the recently fielded LAV A2



which incorporates a ballistic protection upgrade, an automatic fires suppression system, suspension upgrade, replacement of the hydraulic turret drive with an electronic drive, and an upgrade in the power pack improvement.<sup>21</sup>

Although a revised MCWP 3-14 was published, there is still significant work required. A current discrepancy is the need to update the chapter on doctrinal employment of the LAR Battalion in urban operations. Other discrepancies include adding a chapter including considerations for the MAGTF commander when assigning an LAR Battalion as a battle-space owner and the addition of a chapter on the doctrinal considerations for LAR in counter insurgency operations – the basis of the action memo from General Petraeus calling for additional LAR-like forces in the Marine Corps.

MCWP 3-14.1 is under final review for print and was last updated on December 19, 1997.<sup>22</sup> MCWP 3-14.1 outlines a standardized way to train Marine LAV-25 gunners and is critical to ensure the effective use of the M242 chain gun.<sup>23</sup> Due to the dispersed locations of the LAR Battalions, it is essential that a standardized method of training is conducted and that best practices are updated as required. In theory, each change to the fire control system or the actual operation of the gun should be recorded and the MCWP updated as required.

The LAR specific MCWPs were finally updated not due to a properly organized and efficient system, but through the will power and hard work of the Light Armored Capabilities Integration Officer and a group of Captains and Staff Non-Commissioned Officers at LAVTC. Due to the high operational tempo of the LAR Battalions and a lack of prioritization within the LAR community, the documents were not kept relevant through consistent updates. The establishment of a LAR Regiment would provide the

oversight needed to ensure a standard doctrine was routinely reviewed and enforced in the operating forces. Furthermore, the establishment of an LAR Regiment would ensure the doctrinal practices recorded in the LAR specific MCWPs are utilized.

A memorandum for the record from a meeting of the LAR Battalion Commanders in Quantico, Virginia in October of 2007 highlights the importance of updating LAR doctrine. The memorandum states:

MCWP 3-14 (Employment of the Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion) requires updating in order to reflect the full spectrum of (military) operations. Understanding current doctrine helps define requirements of LAR capabilities; the LOAG has agreed to assist the School of Infantry West and Light Armored Capabilities Integration officer (LtCol Koch) in providing subject matter expertise in the creation of a coordinating draft of the new MCWP 3-14 by LOAG 2-07.<sup>24</sup>

Through the creation of a LAR Regiment, the Regiment's staff, comprising of subject matter experts ranging from senior Staff Non Commissioned Officers to officers, will ensure the LAR specific MCWPs are routinely updated as required and that the documents reflect accurate information. Furthermore the authority of the Regimental Commander will ensure each LAR Battalion and the LAVTC contribute to the doctrine writing process.

## **Organization**

The LAR Regimental organization would differ significantly from the standard Rifle Regiment within the Marine Corps. The LAR regiment should be organized similar to the Marine Special Operations Command Regiment (MARSOC) in order to best serve the LAR community and the Marine Corps as a whole. The mission of MARSOC is to:

Recruit, organize, train, equip, educate, sustain, maintain combat readiness and deploy task organized, scaleable, and responsive Marine Corps Special Operations Forces worldwide to accomplish Special Operations missions assigned by CDRUSSOCOM [Commander United States Special

Operations Command], and / or Geographic Combatant Commanders employing SOF.<sup>25</sup>

The MSOR was activated in April 2009, three years after the activation of MARSOC on February, 24 2006.<sup>26</sup> Before the activation of MSOR, 1st and 2d MSOB, and the Marine Special Operations Advisor Group fell directly under the MARSOC commander, while 3d and 4th MSOB fell under the MSOAG.<sup>27</sup> The MSOR consists of a Headquarters company and three MSOBs. The Regiment was created to enable standardization and increase the layers of command and control of the separate battalions.<sup>28</sup> The MSOR is Tasked Organized as follows shown in Table 1.<sup>29</sup>

During a Marine Corps interview at the MSOR activation ceremony, J. D. Duke, the operations officer for the MSOR stated, “the changes (resulting from the establishment of the MSOR) have been made to create three battalions that will all have equal capabilities in direct action, special reconnaissance, and foreign internal defense.”<sup>30</sup> Major Christopher K. Wales, the executive officer of 2d MSOB summed up the benefits of the creation of MSOR during the same interview as follows, “having three like battalions with the same organization and structure, the same table of equipment, the same skill sets, the same mind set for mission focus will allow MARSOC to engage anywhere in the spectrum where SOCOM is involved. It will enable us to succeed.”<sup>31</sup> Wales added, “What we’ve seen (with the implementation of the Regiment) is an increase in efficiency in operational planning and logistics planning at our level . . . simply because there are so many ancillary tasks that the regiment is now responsible for.”<sup>32</sup>

The newly created LAR Regiment would focus primarily on the training, organization, standardization, and equipping of the LAR community to meet the current and future needs of the Marine Corps. The LAR Battalions would have many of the

benefits enjoyed by the MSOB from the creation of MSOR after the creation of the LAR Regiment. Through the establishment of a regimental commander and staff, the LAR Regiment will ensure all four independent LAR Battalions are unified in their approach to training, readiness, and allocation of equipment.

Unlike the MSOR, which is capable of forming scaleable and task organized forces worldwide; the primary mission of the LAR Regiment would be sourcing well-trained, equipped, and manned LAR Battalions. A proposed mission statement and Task Organization for the LAR Regiment is: "Train, standardize, and source Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalions to accomplish reconnaissance, security and economy of force operations, limited offensive or defensive operations, and other operations as directed by the Division or supported commander."

Such an organization is important, as it will not require the robust personnel requirements of a traditional regimental size headquarters. With the primary focus of "training, standardization, and sourcing," the LAR Regiment will not require a robust support section as the LAR Battalions have proven their self-sustainment capability over the past twenty-five years. Lieutenant Colonel Scott Leonard, current Battalion Commander of 1st LAR Battalion, concurs. When asked how he thinks the LAR Regiment should be organized he stated:

I personally would make the case that it is not designed to be a warfighting headquarters, it is designed to be a training, standardization, and sourcing headquarters. There are some of the Napoleonic staff sections that you probably can do without.<sup>33</sup>

Table 2 depicts a proposed task organization for the LAR Regiment. As an administrative command, similar to the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group, the LAR

Regiment is much smaller than a Rifle Regiment.<sup>34</sup> The provided task organization for the LAR Regiment is based on the current MCESG task organization.

If the Marine Corps is to adopt the creation of the LAR Regiment, the command relationship it will operate under requires significant discussion. Although the final answer is beyond the scope and range of this paper, it is imperative to understand that the command relationship would be a supporting vice operational command. Two proposed command relationships are provided in Table 4 to spark discussion. It is recommended that the members of the LOAG address this issue during the next GCE board.

### **Training and Facilities**

There is a lack of standardization in the training regimens of the four LAR Battalions. These differences are compounded by the individual personalities of the battalion commanders (some of whom have little to no operational LAR experience), an ineffective and incomplete LAR Training and Readiness Manual, and the employment of LAR Battalions in missions not inherent in the mission statement of an LAR Battalion. The LAR Regiment would prove instrumental in overseeing the standardization of all training within the LAR community and would serve to eliminate the deviations in the standardized training of the battalion's scouts, designated marksmen, missile-men, and LAR gunnery training in each battalion.

LAVTC is responsible for all formal training of the Marines within the LAR community.<sup>35</sup> LAVTC teaches courses to entry-level drivers, Vehicle Commanders, junior officers assigned to an LAR Battalion, LAV Crewman Evaluators, and LAR Master Gunners.<sup>36</sup> There is currently no formal training for the gunners aboard the LAV Anti-Tank Variants, the LAV Mortar-men, and the LAV scouts.<sup>37</sup> Although some of the

skills required by the Marines falling in the latter category are formally taught at LAVTC, many of the skills required must be taught within the individual battalions. Due to the latitude provided to the LAR Battalion Commanders to train their Marines, there are often significant differences in the training standards between battalions.

In theory, the LAR Training and Readiness manual ensures standardization in the training of the above mentioned skill sets. The manual serves to promulgate policies, procedures, and standards for the training of LAR units. Each specific MOS within the Marine Corps has an appropriate manual to guide it in regards to how to properly train individuals and units within its community. Unfortunately, the operational tempo of the LAR Battalions and the over-tasking of LAVTC prevent this theory from becoming a reality. Too often, a piecemeal cadre of LAVTC instructors and a minimal selection of officers from the LAR Battalions convene to make the necessary changes to the LAR Training and Readiness Manual. The result is a sub-standard product that is not comprehensive enough to ensure standardized training throughout the LAR Battalions.<sup>38</sup> This lack of guidance results in Battalions creating independent scout, Anti-Armor, and mortar training based upon the preferences and proficiency of unit commanders. The creation of a LAR Regiment will provide the guidance, co-location of subject matter experts, and command leverage required to create a proper document.

The creation of the MSOR played a significant role in alleviating the training and standardization problems just as a LAR Regiment would do the same for the LAR Battalions. As explained by Colonel Masur:

Because the operational units of MARSOC were created from 1st and 2d Force Recon Companies and the Foreign Military Training Unit, there were inherited differences in the missions and training of our companies. With the decision to create three like battalions capable of conducting full

spectrum operations came the need for standardized pre-deployment training for all individuals, teams, companies and battalions. The regiment has been the agent tasked with shaping and driving this standardized PTP based on current operational requirements.<sup>39</sup>

The creation of the LAR Regiment should coincide with the creation of the LAR Training and Education Center of Excellence (TECOE). The creation of the TECOE will require the building of a new facility to house the LAR Regiment, 1st LAR, 3d LAR, and LAVTC. Co-location of these entities will further enable the synchronization of the above-mentioned efforts to standardize all LAV related training. This facility should be built aboard Marine Corps Base 29 Palms due to the extensive training areas available for the regiment to utilize.

As per Training and Education Command (TECOM) Order 5420.1, a TECOE provides, "connectivity between the Operating Forces, Expeditionary Command (MCSC), the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL), and Training and Education Command (TECOM)."<sup>40</sup> A justification for designation of LAVTC was submitted to TECOM from the School of Infantry West on July 25, 2008 outlining how the LAR TECOE would execute the six distinct tasks assigned to a TECOE.<sup>41</sup>

Fiscally, the creation of the TECOE makes sense as it would allow the co-location of the majority of the LAR Battalions and LAVTC with the LAR regiment as well as provide a course of action for the facilities required to house the Marine Personnel Carrier (MPC). The MPC was requested in the U.S. Central Commands' Joint Urgent Operational Need (JUON) statement was issued on March 27, 2009. This JOUN formally requested the Marine Corps increase its ability to provide units with LAR-like capability for theater deployment and stated a requirement for a unit that can operate in a variety of mission profiles and feature a balance of armor protection, mobility, flexible

C2, and discriminating fires capability. The JUON strongly supported the medium-weight personnel carrier as a potential solution.<sup>42</sup>

Because of this JUON, Program Manager (PM) LAV was tasked to pursue the MPC acquisition timeline. The acquisition timeline received money for Program Objective Memorandum (POM) 12, but Initial / Final Operating Capability (IOC/FOC) was extended by two years.<sup>43</sup> Fielding of the Marine Personnel Carrier will require the funding to build new maintenance ramps, infrastructure, and barracks aboard Camp Pendleton and Camp Lejuene. In order to facilitate the creation of the LAR Regiment and the creation of the LAR TECOE, it is proposed that the MPC units inherent the current facilities occupied by 1<sup>st</sup> LAR Battalion, 3d LAR Battalion, and LAVTC and that the money allocated for the construction of the MPC facilities be spent on building the LAR Regiment's facilities aboard Marine Corps Base 29 Palms, California.

## **Materiel**

The creation of the LAR Regimental Commander billet will enable unity of effort in providing guidance to PM LAV in regards to the allocations for funds in research and development. Currently the semi-annual LOAGs are used by PM LAV to seek input and guidance from the LAR Battalion Commanders in regards to what technologies should be developed in order to maintain the lethality, mobility, and survivability of the LAV family of vehicles.

PM LAV works in conjunction with many other Marine Corps agencies and is responsible for the LAVs current readiness status and for ensuring that the LAV is prepared for future challenges. When the LAV entered service in 1983, it had an estimated service life of twenty-years. The Service Life Extension Program initiated by



PM LAV in the late 1990's extended its life to 2015. This date has recently been extended to 2025 and will result in the Marine Corps LAVs seeing more than forty-years of active service.<sup>44</sup>

Due to the continuous rotations of LAR Battalions, the battalion commanders who are able to attend the OAGs must make decisions and provide the guidance required by PM LAV to go forward with research and development. Despite the best efforts of the battalion commanders and staff that attend the OAGs, continuity is difficult to maintain and priorities often shift dramatically with the rotations and experiences of the acting LAR Battalion Commanders.

Colonel Brian Buckles, current Program Manager for the LAV concurs that a Regimental commander would provide much needed vision and continuity to his office and to the LAR community as a whole. Colonel Buckles sees the Regimental Commander facilitating a five-year plan, which will provide a clear road map in regards to how money should be allocated for LAV requirements and research and development. Buckles stated, "this five-year plan will help keep us from pursuing materiel solutions that are personality driven and are not actually requirement driven and supported by the entire community."<sup>45</sup>

Once again, the potential materiel benefits gained from the creation of the LAR regiment are evident with the creation of the MSOR. When Colonel Masur was asked how the MSOR benefits MARSOC and the individual MSOBs he stated:

Previously, (before MSOR) our operational battalions would generate requirements independently within the MARSOC RERB (Requirements Evaluation Review Board). This led to non-standard capability sets in some areas. With the creation of the MSOR, the battalions now levy their requirements at a regimental RERB. The regiment validates the requirement in coordination with all three battalions after assessing its

operational need and determining how much of the capability is needed within all of the battalions. The regiment then brings it forward to MARSOC championing the requirement with a single voice. The voice of the regiment within the requirements process holds more weight and this effort has led to better standardization across the operational units.<sup>46</sup>

The "single voice" provided for the MSOBs by MSOR is exactly what is needed for the LAR Community and PM LAV to keep the LAV lethal, survivable, and mobile on today's and tomorrow's battlefields.

## **Personnel**

The creation of MSOR serves as an excellent example of the advantages of what the LAR Regiment will provide to the LAR community in terms of personnel management. Through the creation of the LAR Regiment, the regimental staff will ensure all four LAR Battalions are properly manned to execute current and unexpected overseas contingency operations. The LAR Regiment will also provide a staff and commander dedicated to ensuring the right individuals are assigned to the key LAR billets within the supporting establishment.

The LAR Regiment would serve as a means of evenly distributing and cross leveling personnel across LAR Battalion as required to ensure staffing goals are met prior to each deployment. Without the LAR Regiment, the LAR Battalion Commanders coordinate directly with one another to determine which battalion receives new personnel. Other times, LAR Battalions liaison directly with the Division Chief of Staff and from Battalion Commander to Commanding General to make this happen. The LAR Regiment adds a level of quality control and efficiency to this process and enables a single point of contact for all parties.<sup>47</sup>

Although the Regiment would provide much needed efficiency and balance to the assignment of personnel to the LAR Battalions, the primary benefit of a LAR Regiment would be in the retention of subject matter experts in the community and in the assignment of the right individuals to key billets that affect the community as a whole. There are a number of billets outside the LAR Battalions that have a direct impact on the future of the LAR community that must be assigned to the most capable and knowledgeable officers available.<sup>48</sup>

The LAR Regiment would serve not only as a reservoir of LAR subject matter experts; it would ensure the right officers are assigned as representatives in other commands. Buckles argues:

... if you are real smart as a [LAR] community, you will shape who goes to requirements, you will shape who goes to PP&O as the occupational field commander, and will ensure the right billets are filled by the community at the OAGs and then influence the monitor process to ensure that the right individuals are assigned these key billets.<sup>49</sup>

Colonel Masur witnessed first hand how the establishment of MSOR positively impacted what were formerly three independent MSOBs. He stated,

... the regimental headquarters has also gone a long way to developing policies and guidance with regards to standardizing special duty assignment pays, awards processing, casualty notification, training plans and operational designs for our enduring missions. The regimental headquarters, in addition, is also better suited to manage manpower across all three battalions.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

The success enjoyed by the LAR community over the past twenty-five years is well documented and has rightfully resulted in a call for an overall increase in LAVs available for worldwide deployment. The success of the LAR Battalions was earned through the hard work of those that comprise the ranks of the battalion's more than

institutional enablers provided by the Marine Corps. Simply adding more LAVs and more capabilities that are “LAR-like” will not maximize the capabilities LAR Battalions provide. In order to achieve the full potential of the LAR community, a LAR Regiment must be created. Through the creation of an LAR Regiment, the Regimental commander will ensure the LAR community is standardized, well trained, properly manned and equipped, and prepared to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Map 1: Area of Operation for 1<sup>st</sup> LAR, OIF II.

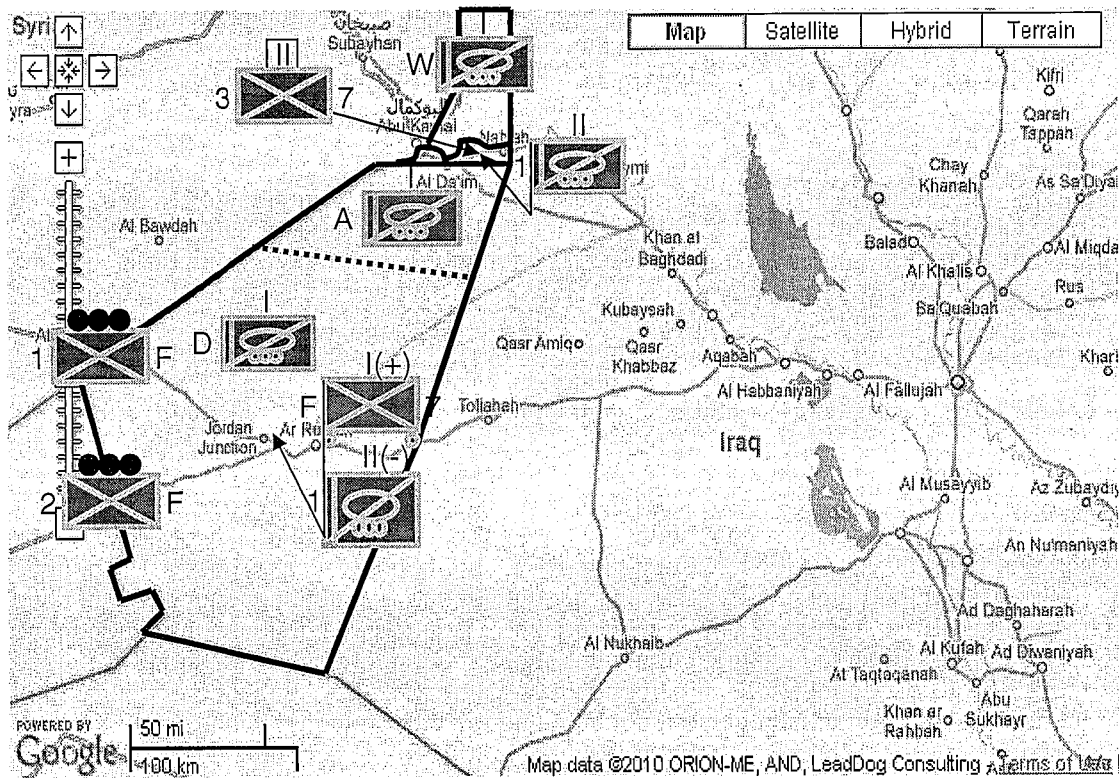


Table 1: MARSOC Chain of Command with MSOR<sup>51</sup>

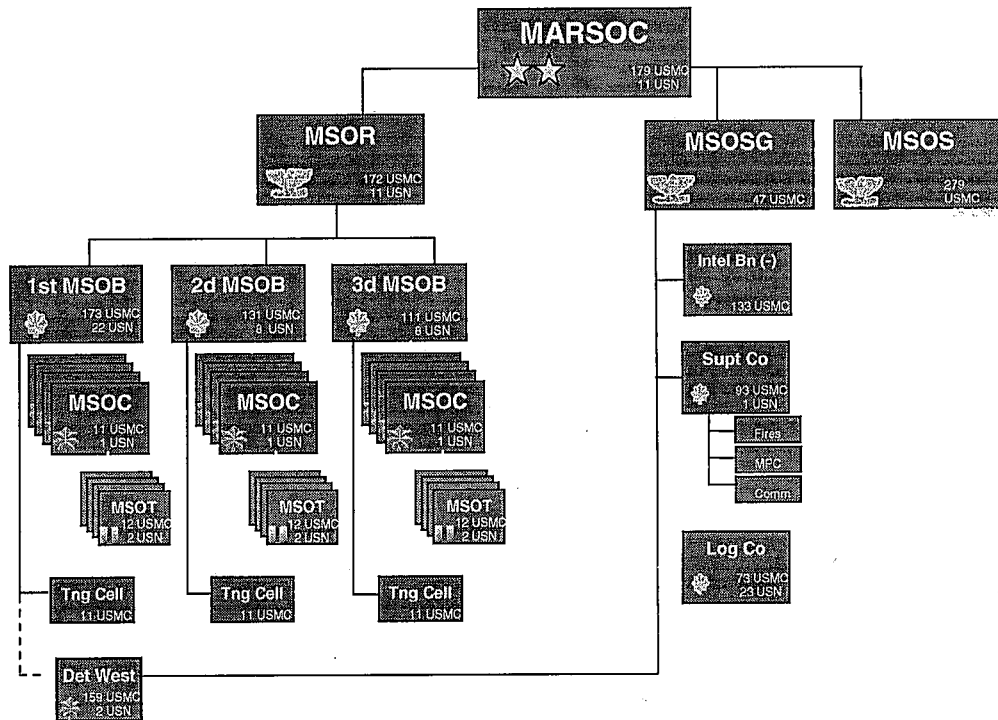


Table 2: Proposed LAR Regiment Task Organization

| BILLET DESCRIPTION    | ALPHA GRADE | BMOS | PMOS |
|-----------------------|-------------|------|------|
| HEADQUARTERS          |             |      |      |
| CO                    | COL         | 8041 | 8041 |
| EXECUTIVE OFFICER     | LTCOL       | 0303 | 0302 |
| BN SGTMAJ             | SGTMAJ      | 8999 | 8999 |
| S-1 ADJUTANT SECT     |             |      |      |
| S-1/ADJUTANT          | CAPT        | 0180 | 0180 |
| CAREER PLANNER        | GYSGT       | 4821 | 4821 |
| ADMIN CHIEF           | MSGT        | 0193 | 0193 |
| CHIEF CLERK           | SSGT        | 0193 | 0193 |
| ASST ADMIN CHIEF      | SSGT        | 0193 | 0193 |
| CORRES/FILES CHIEF    | SGT         | 0193 | 0193 |
| RPTS CLERK/CORRES CLK | LCPL        | 0193 | 0193 |
| RPTS CLERK/CORRES CLK | LCPL        | 0193 | 0193 |
| DIRECTIVES CLERK      | LCPL        | 0193 | 0193 |
| DIRECTIVES CLERK      | LCPL        | 0193 | 0193 |
| FILES CLERK           | PVT         | 0193 | 0193 |
| S-3 SECT              |             |      |      |
| S-3 OFFICER           | LTCOL       | 0303 | 0302 |
| ASST OPSO             | MAJ         | 0303 | 0302 |
| OPS CHIEF             | MGYSGT      | 0313 | 0313 |
| ASST OPS CHIEF        | MSGT        | 0313 | 0313 |
| MARINE GUNNER         | CW04        | 0313 | 0313 |
| MESSENGER/DRV         | PVT         | 0313 | 0313 |
| MESSENGER/DRV         | PVT         | 0313 | 0313 |

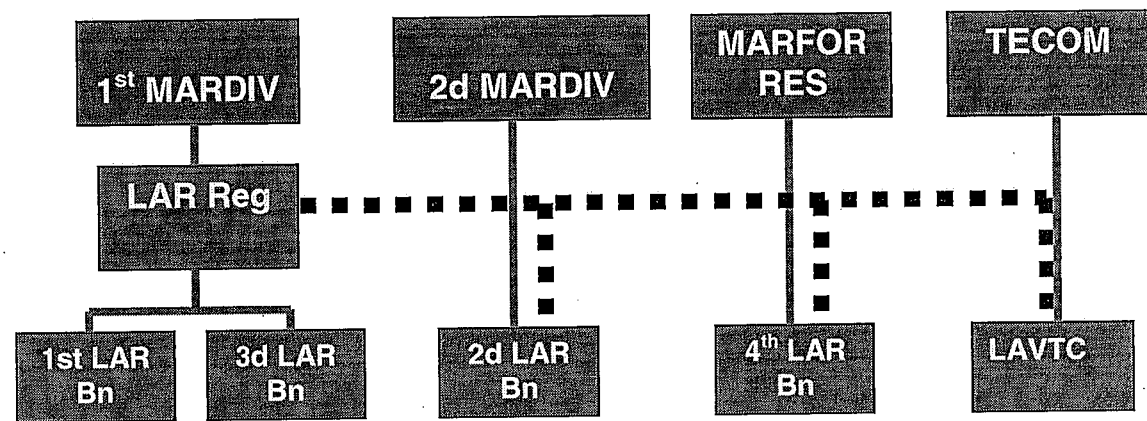
|                                |       |      |      |
|--------------------------------|-------|------|------|
| S-4 SECT                       |       |      |      |
| SUPPLY /<br>TRANSPORTATION OFF | CAPT  | 3002 | 3002 |
| SUPPLY CHIEF                   | GYSGT | 3043 | 3043 |
| ASST SUPPLY CHIEF              | SSGT  | 3043 | 3043 |
| SUPPLY ADMIN CLERK             | SGT   | 3043 | 3043 |
| SUPPLY ADMIN CLERK             | CPL   | 3043 | 3043 |
| SUPPLY ADMIN CLERK             | LCPL  | 3043 | 3043 |
| SUPPLY ADMIN CLERK             | LCPL  | 3043 | 3043 |

Table 3: Comparison of Personnel Assigned to Various Regimental Headquarters

| Regiment HQ Type                       | USMC<br>Officers | USMC<br>Enlisted | USN<br>Officers | USN<br>Enlisted |
|--|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Infantry Regiment                      | 28               | 202              | 0               | 0               |
| Marine Special Operations<br>Regiment  | 23               | 171              | 154             | 3               |
| Marine Corps Embassy<br>Security Group | 12               | 99               | 2               | 1               |
| LAR Regiment                           | 7                | 21               | 0               | 0               |



Table 4: Proposed Command Relationships



■ ■ ■ ■ | ADCON

—— OPCON

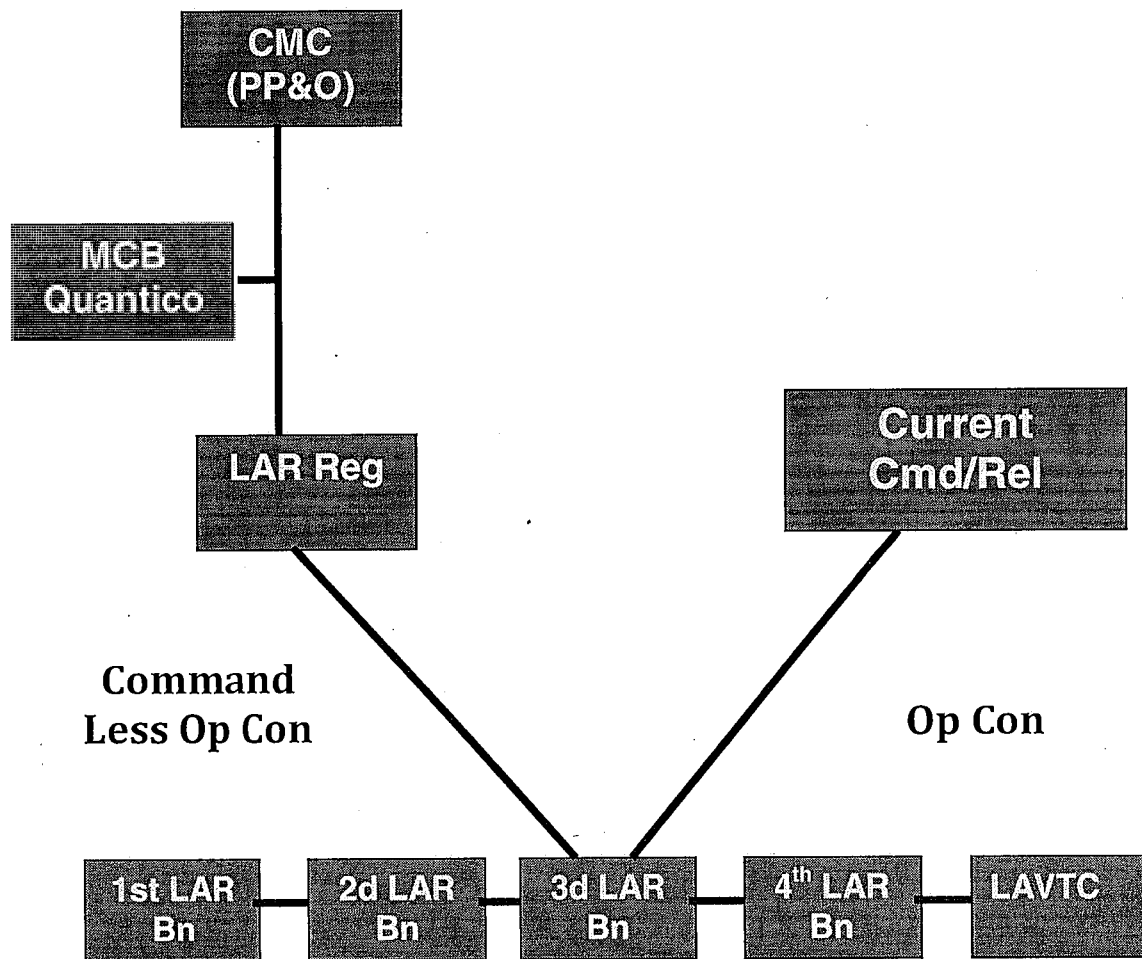


Table 5: Key LAR Billets within the Supporting Establishment

| Rank                                       | Title  | Organization   |
|--|--|--|
| Master Sergeant (0313)                     | Senior SNCO Military Occupational Specialist               | Manpower and Reserve Affairs                               |
| Master Sergeant (0313)                     | Operations Chief, PM LAV                                   | Systems Command  |
| Major (PMOS 0302 / NMOS 0303)              | Commanding Officer, Light Armored Vehicle Training Company | School of Infantry (West) / Training and Education Command |
| Major (PMOS 0302 / NMOS 0303)              | Operations Officer, PM LAV                                 | Systems Command  |
| Major (PMOS 0302 / NMOS 0303)              | LAR Occupational Sponsor                                   | Plans, Policies, and Organization                          |
| Lieutenant Colonel (PMOS 0302 / NMOS 0303) | Capabilities Integration Officer                           | Fires and Maneuver Integration Division                    |

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Central Command, *Marine Corps Light Armor Capability*, Action Memo, March 30, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Central Command, "Action Memo," 1.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Central Command, "Action Memo," 1.

<sup>4</sup> Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *The Employment of the Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion*, MCWP 3-14 (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, September 17, 2009), 1-1.

<sup>5</sup> MCWP 3-14, 1-1.

<sup>6</sup> Marine Corps Public Affairs, "Marines Return To Iraq," Marine Corps News, March 8, 2004, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2004/03/mil-040308-mcn02a.htm> (accessed December 5, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> See Map 1.

<sup>8</sup> Major David Hudspeth, interview with author, December 28, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff Manual, "Operation of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System," [http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs\\_directives/cdata/unlimit/m317001.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/m317001.pdf), March 1, 2007 (accessed December 15, 2009)..

<sup>10</sup> Deputy Commandant, Plans Policies, and Operations, *Charter for the Marine Corps Ground Board Process*, December 1, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> LAR Operational Advisory Group, *LOAG Report 2-07*, October 12, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> *Charter for the Marine Corps Ground Board Process*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Headquarters Marine Corps, *Changes to Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME) Requirements*, MARADMIN 391/07, June 28, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> LAVTC, Homepage:

<http://www.marines.mil/unit/tecom/soiwest/Pages/AITBn/LightArmoredVehicleTrainingCompany.aspx> (accessed December 5, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Headquarters Marine Corps, *Modification to FY10 Command Screening Board*, MARADMIN 455/09, August 3, 2009.

<sup>16</sup> Colonel Daniel R. Masur, interview with author, January 27, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication Status*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, Calendar Year 2009, Marine Corps Bulletin 5600, September 27, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Marine Corps Bulletin 5600.

<sup>19</sup> Master Sergeant Bill Vanhoy, Operations Chief, LAVTC, interview with author, January 114, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> MCWP 3-14, forward

<sup>21</sup> Micucci, 24.

<sup>22</sup> USMC Doctrine Division webpage:

<https://www.doctrine.usmc.mil/aspweb/info.asp#mission> (accessed December 3, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, *Light Armored Vehicle-25 Gunnery and Employment*, MCWP 3-14.1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, December 19, 1997), forward.

<sup>24</sup> LAR Operational Advisory Report 2-07.

<sup>25</sup> Colonel Daniel R. Masur, "MARSOC Command Brief" (lecture, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA, January 5, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Sergeant Sara Wood, "*Marine Corps Special Operations Command Activated*," American forces Press Service, February 24, 2006, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=14768> (accessed December 22, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> Corporal Richard Blumenstein, "Marine Special Operations Regiment Stands Up," Marine Corps New, September 23, 2009, <http://www.marsoc.usmc.mil/news/MSOR.html> (accessed 17 December, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Corporal Richard Blumenstein, "Marine Special Operations Regiment Stands Up."

<sup>29</sup> Colonel Daniel R. Masur, "MARSOC Command Brief."

<sup>30</sup> Corporal Richard Blumenstein, "Marine Special Operations Regiment Stands Up."

<sup>31</sup> Corporal Richard Blumenstein, "Marine Special Operations Regiment Stands Up."

<sup>32</sup> Corporal Richard Blumenstein, "Marine Special Operations Regiment Stands Up."

<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Scott D. Leonard, interview with author, January 13, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> See Table 3

<sup>35</sup> Headquarters Marine Corps, *Light Armored Reconnaissance Training and Readiness Manual*, Marine Corps Order 3501.3, April 7, 2000.

<sup>36</sup> LAVTC homepage:  
<http://www.marines.mil/unit/tecom/soiwest/Pages/AITBn/LightArmoredVehicleTrainingCompany.aspx> (accessed December 5, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> *LAR Training and Readiness Manual*

<sup>38</sup> Major Phil Laing, interview with author, January 11, 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Colonel Daniel R. Masur, interview with author, January 27, 2010.

<sup>40</sup> Training and Education Command, *Training and Education Centers of Excellence (TECOE)*, Training and Education Command order 5420.1, December 15, 2003.

<sup>41</sup> School of Infantry West, *First Endorsement of Justification of Reconnaissance and Light Armored Reconnaissance Training and Education Center of Excellence at School of Infantry West*, Endorsement, July 25, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Central Command, *Marine Corps Light Armored Capability Joint Urgent Operational Need (JUON)*, March 27, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Major Henry Kayser, Operations Officer, PM LAV, interview with January, 29 2010.

<sup>44</sup> Col Mike Micucci, "USMC LAVs, The Marine Corps Transitions the Light Armored Vehicle for the Future." *Vehicle and Artillery Review*, (February 2007): 22-25.

<sup>45</sup> Colonel Brian Buckles, interview with author, January 26, 2010.

<sup>46</sup> Colonel Daniel R. Masur, interview author, January 27, 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Scott D. Leonard, interview with author, January 13, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> See table 5

<sup>49</sup> Colonel Brian Buckles, interview with author, January 26, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Colonel Daniel R. Masur, interview with author, January 27, 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Colonel Daniel R. Masur, "MARSOC Command Brief."

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2009).

## Acronyms

**AOR:** Area of Operations

**C2:** Command and Control

**CDRUSSOCOM:** Commander United States Special Operations Command

**DC CD&I:** Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration

**DC PP&O:** Deputy Commandant Plans, Policies, and Organization

**DOTMLPF:** Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities

**FOC:** Final Operating Capacity

**GCE:** Ground Combat Element

**HQMC:** Headquarters Marine Corps

**IOAG:** Infantry Operational Advisory Group

**IOC:** Initial Operating Capability

**JUON:** Joint Urgent Operational Need

**LAV:** Light Armored Vehicle

**LAVTC:** Light Armored Vehicle Training Company

**LAR:** Light Armored Reconnaissance

**LOAG:** Light Armored Vehicle Operational Advisory Group

**MAGTF:** Marine Air Task Force

**MARADMIN:** Marine Administrative Message

**MARSOC:** Marine Special Operations Command

**MCRP:** Marine Corps Reference Publications

**MCWP:** Marine Corps Warfighting Publication

**MSOB:** Marine Special Operations Battalion

**MSOR:** Marine Special Operations Regiment

**MEF:** Marine Expeditionary Forces

**MEU:** Marine Expeditionary Units

**MOS:** Military Occupational Specialty

**MPC:** Marine Personnel Carrier

**OAG:** Operational Advisory Group

**PME:** Professional Military Education

**PM LAV:** Program Manager LAV

**PP&O:** Plans, Policies, and Organization

**POM:** Program Objective Memorandum

**RDJTF:** Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force

**RERB:** Requirements Evaluation Review Board

**TECOE:** Training and Education Center of Excellence.

**TECOM:** Training and Education Command

**TTP:** Technique, Tactic, Procedure.

**UDP:** Unit Deployment Program

**USMC:** United States Marine Corps